

Message Text

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POUCHED FOR INFO TO ALL AMCONSULS IN CANADA

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SUBJ MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS PELLETIER

NEW AMBASSADOR TO FRANCE

REF OTTAWA 2605

1. SUMMARY: GERARD PELLETIER, CANADIAN MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS, HAS RESIGNED TO ACCEPT APPOINTMENT AS AMBASSADOR TO FRANCE. WHILE RESIGNATION IN MIDST OF PRESENT FEDERAL-QUEBEC JURISDICTIONAL BATTLE OVER CONTROL OF COMMUNICATIONS POLICY IS SOMEWHAT SURPRISING, THE MOVE HAS BEEN RUMORED FOR SEVERAL MONTHS. PELLETIER APPARENTLY DESIRES RELIEF FROM POLITICAL WARS AND HIS PERSONALITY APPEARS WELL SUITED TO AMBASSADORIAL POSITION. SINCE HE IS ONE OF PM TRUDEAU' OLDEST AND CLOSEST POLITICAL ALLIES, THE APPOINTMENT DEMONSTRATES SIGNIFICANT GOC INTEREST IN EVER-WARMING CANADIAN-FRENCH RELATIONS. PELLETIER SUCCESSOR AS MINISTER REPORTEDLY WILL BE PIERRE JUNEAU, PRESENTLY CHAIRMAN OF CANADIAN RADIO-TELEVISION COMMISSION. JUNEAU, WHO MUST RUN IN BY-ELECTION TO WIN PELLETIER'S PARLIAMENTARY SEAT, IS EXTRAORDINARILY QUALIFIED IN COMMUNICATIOND FIELD AND IS KNOWN AS
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STRONG ADVOCATE OF GREATER CANADIAN CONTENT IN

CANADIAN PROGRAMMING. END SUMMARY.

2. AUGUST 29 PRESS REPORTS COMMUNICATIONS MINISTER PELLETIER HAS RESIGNED EFFECTIVE AUGUST 29 AND WILL BE APPOINTED AS AMBASSADOR TO FRANCE REPLACING LEO CADIEUX. SINCE PELLETIER HAS BEEN SENIOR FEDERAL FIGURE IN FEDERAL-QUEBEC CONTROVERSY OVER WHETHER COMMUNICATIONS POLICY WILL BE UNDER FEDERAL OR PROVINCIAL CONTROL, HIS RESIGNATION IN THE HEAT OF THIS BATTLE SEEMS SOMEWHAT SURPRISING. BUT IT HAS BEEN OPEN SECRET THAT 56-YEAR-OLD PELLETIER HAS BEEN TIRING OF POLITICAL ROUGH AND TUMBLE IN WHICH HE HAS APPEARED INCREASINGLY ILL-AT-EASE. REPORTEDLY, HE HAS HAD HIS EYE ON PARIS EMBASSY FOR SOME TIME. HE IS HIGHLY INTELLIGENT, SCHOLARLY, AND HIS SOFT-SPOKEN RESERVE GIVES NEARLY A DOUR IMPRESSION. ALTHOUGH THIS MANNER MAY BE UNUSUAL FOR A POLITICIAN, PELLETIER IS ONE OF PM TRUDEAU'S OLDEST AND CLOSEST POLITICAL ALLIES AND CONFIDENTS. TRUDEAU, PELLETIER AND MINISTER OF TRANSPORT JEAN MARCHAND ENTERED NATIONAL POLITICS IN QUEBEC TOGETHER IN 1965 AS THE VANGUARD OF THE FRENCH-CANADIAN INTELLECTUAL AND LIBERAL WAVE OF THE "QUIET REVOLUTION." PELLETIER EARLIER HAD BEEN DISTINGUISHED JOURNALIST. THE THREE, KNOWN IN POLITICAL CIRCLES AS "THE THREE WISE MEN" HAVE BEEN CLOSE POLITICAL ALLIES EVER SINCE. APPOINTMENT OF ONE OF TRUDEAU'S CLOSEST POLITICAL ALLIES TO PARIS EMBASSY IS YET ANOTHER SIGN OF WARMING CANADIAN RELATIONSHIP WITH FRANCE, MOST RECENTLY DEMONSTRATED BY JULY VISIT OF FRENCH INTERIOR MINISTER PONIATOWSKI TO CANADA (REFTEL).

3. MEDIA REPORTS THAT PELLETIER'S SUCCESSOR WILL BE PIERRE JUNEAU, PRESENT CHAIRMAN OF CANADIAN RADIO-TELEVISION COMMISSION, WHICH REGULATES ALL CANADIAN BROADCASTING. TO ASSUME MINISTERIAL POSITION, JUNEAU MUST WIN BY-ELECTION IN PELLETIER'S PARLIAMENTARY RIDING. HE HAS BEEN IN THE FILM AND BROADCASTING AREA SINCE 1949, FIRST WITH THE NATIONAL FILM BOARD AND, SINCE 1968, WITH THE RADIO-TELEVISION COMMISSION. KNOWN AS THE GODFATHER OF THE CANADIAN AIRWAVES, CONFIDENTIAL

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HE IS ONE OF THE MOST RESPECTED FIGURES IN BROADCASTING. HE IS A STRONG ADVOCATE OF INCREASED CANADIAN CONTENT IN BROADCASTING BUT THROUGH IMPROVED QUALITY AND QUANTITY OF THE LOCAL PRODUCT. IT WAS EXPECTED THAT TRUDEAU WOULD APPOINT ANOTHER FRENCH-CANADIAN TO REPLACE PELLETIER. LE DEVOIR, MONTREAL FRENCH-LANGUAGE DAILY, SEES THIS APPOINTMENT AS INDICATION FEDERAL POSITION ON THE QUEBEC COMMUNICATIONS ISSUE WILL BE NO

LESS FIRM THAN UNDER PELLETIER AND POSSIBLY TOUGHER.

4. OFFICIAL CONFIRMATION THESE SPPOINTMENTS EXPECTED
MOMENTARILY. FULL BIOS ON PELLETIER AND JUNEAU
FOLLOW BY AIRGRAM.
PORTER

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